The University of Alberta Department of Music presents:

Music at Convocation Hall

"Chamber Winds"

Angela Schroeder – Conductor

Sunday, September 14, 2008
1:15 pm – Pre Concert Lecture: Dr Angela Schroeder
2:00 pm – Concert

DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Program

Petite Symphonie (1885) — Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

i. Adagio; Allegretto
ii. Andante Cantabile
iii. Scherzo
iv. Finale

Divertissement pour Instruments à Vent, Op. 36 (1890) — Emile Bernard (1843-1902)

i. Andante sostenuto; Allegro molto moderato
ii. Allegro vivace
iii. Andante; Allegro non troppo

Intermission

Sept Danses d'apres le ballet "Les malheurs de Sophie" pour 10 instruments à vent (1970) — Jean Françaix (1912-1997)

i. Le jeu de la poupée
ii. Funérailles de la poupée
iii. La presentation des petits amis
iv. Variation de Paul
v. Pas de deux entre Sophie et Paul
vi. La goûter
vii. Danses des filets à papillons

Serenade for Wind Instruments (1898) — Arthur Bird (1856-1923)

i. Allegro moderato
ii. Adagio; Allegretto grazioso
iii. Allegro assai
iv. Allegro energico

Shelley Younge, Lindsay Elford – flutes
Beth Levia, Matt Jaffray – oboes
Jeff Campbell, Amber Campbell – clarinets
Diane Persson, Matt Howatt – bassoons
Allene Hackelman, Olwyn Supeene – horns

Program Notes
by Andrea Eng

Emile Bernard (1843-1902)

Composer (Jean) Emile (August) Bernard was born in Marseilles, France and studied both piano and organ at the Paris Conservatoire. He went on to become the organist for the church of Notre Dames des Champs in Paris, a post that he held from 1887 to 1895. Bernard composed a variety of works between 1875 and 1902, most of which are for keyboard or chamber ensemble, although he also wrote sacred vocal works including two cantatas. One of his first published compositions, *Fantasie et Fugue* (1877) for organ, won the Société des Compositeurs de Paris prize.

Divertissement, Op. 36 was composed for and premiered by the Parisian Société des instruments à vent in 1894. It demonstrates Bernard's characteristic serious and reflective side, and is not quite as lighthearted as one might expect from a divertimento. Nonetheless, the lyrical lines of the piece allow for each player to display their individual instrumental style through various solos, changing styles, effects, and tempi. The first and third movements each begin with slow introductions that open to more lively musical scenes and the entire work is beautifully framed by the music of the slow introduction that returns immediately before the finale.

Charles Gounod (1818 - 1893)

Charles-François Gounod was a highly prolific French nationalist composer who wrote for many different instruments in a wide variety of musical genres, however, today he is best known for his operas, particularly *Faust* (1859) and *Roméo et Juliette* (1867).

Gounod's father, François-Louis was a painter and sculptor, and his mother, Victoire Lemachois, was a pianist and artist. After his father's death (when Charles was only 5 years old), his mother supported the family by establishing a piano studio in her home, this was where he got his earliest musical training. Gounod eventually studied piano and music at various boarding schools, and entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1836 to study counterpoint and fugue. He first competed for the Grande Prix de Rome in 1837 with his cantata *Marie Stuart et Rizzio* and placed second. In 1839, at the age of 21, he finally won the Grande Prix de Rome with his cantata *Fernand* (1839).

After four years of study in Rome, Gounod returned to Paris and took up as position at the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères as the *maître de chapelle*. He briefly took up seminary studies in 1847, only to abandon them in 1848. He got married shortly thereafter to Anna Zimmermann and began his career as a composer in earnest.

After a successful commission of his first opera *Sapho* (1851) for the Paris Opéra in 1851, Gounod became both the director of the Paris Orphéon and the director of vocal instruction in the public schools of Paris and through these connections began receiving commissions for large scale vocal works that eventually lead to more commissions for the Paris Opéra, including the 1858 commission for the opera that would become *Faust*.

During the Franco-Prussian war (July 1870 - May 1871), Gounod moved his family out of Paris and into a home near Dieppe for their safety, and they eventually continued on to England in the fall of 1870. In 1871 he met and was befriended by Georgina Weldon, an amateur singer and the estranged wife of a wealthy Englishman. The friendship took a somewhat scandalous turn and Gounod's wife, Anna, returned to Paris with the children shortly thereafter. Gounod remained in England, living in Mrs Weldon's home until 1874 when he returned to France to reunite with his family.

After returning to Paris he continued with operatic composition, but also began to work with more religious subjects and genres. His catholic faith had always been a strong and central part of his personal life, and now he was beginning to compose more religious works than he had previous in his career, such as the historical fresco *Cinq mars* (1876) and the massive *Messe du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus* (1876). It was also during this late point in his career that he began working more frequently with small-scale works and composing for chamber ensembles. It is from this late point in Gounod's career that we get his *Petite Symphonie* (1885), which is widely considered to be one of the finest pieces for wind ensemble from the 19th century. The *Petite Symphonie* was written for his friend Paul Taffanel, an internationally renowned flute virtuoso and founder of the Société de musique de chambre pour instruments à vent. Written for two flutes, two oboes, two horns, two clarinets, and two bassoons, the *Petite Symphonie* displays not just flute virtuosity, but that of all the instruments. Although on a smaller scale than his operas, this work is full of the characteristic Gounodian melodies. These beautiful melodic lines built of brief and memorable flourishes that are spun out into an intricate musical design. The sophistication of the compositional details in the melody and well-balanced score exemplifies Gounod's mastery of compositional style and the tone colours of the French National school.

Arthur Bird (1856-1923)

Arthur Homer Bird was one of the first American born composers to gain international recognition in Europe. Bird received his early music education from his father and uncles who were composers and compilers of hymn music. In 1875, at the age of 19, he entered the Berlin Hochschule für Musik to study organ. He returned to North America in 1877 and was appointed the organist at St. Matthew's in Halifax, Nova Scotia where he remained until 1881. Bird's first compositions - mostly church and organ music, none of which has been published - date from this time in Canada. In 1881 he returned to Germany to begin formal compositional training and his compositions were noticed by Franz Liszt; the two composers soon became close friends, each an outspoken supporter of the other. After hearing Bird's A *Carnival* Scene (1886) a harsh music critic commented that Bird should be committed to an asylum, Liszt wrote to Bird to say that if Bird went, he would be happy to accompany him there.

Bird returned to the United States for a brief sojourn in 1886, during which the Milwaukee Musical Festival honoured him for his compositions. He then went back to Germany, where he remained for the rest of his life, eventually becoming the Berlin correspondent for the journal *Musical Leader* out of Chicago, and was published as a writer and critic for other prominent American musical journals.

Bird's *Suite in D, Op. 29* (1889) was also commissioned by French flautist Paul Taffanel and the Société de musique de chambre pour instruments à vent. Like Gounod, Bird wrote with Taffanel in mind, and this is shown in the highly virtuosic writing for the flute throughout the work.

Unlike many American composers of his time who tended towards a conservative or more 'classical' style of composition, Bird's music explores the variety of tonalities, colours, and harmonies of his European contemporaries, and particularly of his mentor, Liszt. This can be heard especially in the *Suite in D* as Bird uses traditional forms, but incorporates the uncommon key relationships, chromaticisms, and lively melodies of Late Romanticism, while still reflecting the bright optimism of his American sensibilities.

Jean (René Désiré) Françaix (1912-1997)

Jean Françaix was born in Le Mans, France into a very musical family. His mother was a singer and his father was a composer, pianist, musicologist, and the director of the Le Mans Conservatoire. Françaix's early musical studies were at home, and he then continued his studies at the Paris Conservatoire where he won the Premiere Prix for piano in 1930. A gifted pianist and interpreter, he toured extensively as a solo performer and later, with his daughter, Claude, as his duet partner. Françaix was also a highly prolific composer, with more than 200 works to his name ranging from operas to ballets to vocal works. He identified greatly with being a French composer and was quoted as saying that his musical aim was to give pleasure and "to do something that can be called "Français", with both an S and an X."

Françaix's *Sept Danses d'Après le Ballet "Les Malheurs de Sophie"* was composed for wind quintet 1970 and is based on the short ballet he wrote in 1935. The *Sept Danses* and the ballet are written after the popular 19th century French children's novel *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (Sophie's Misfortunes) written by Sophie Comtesse de Ségur. The novel, written in 1858 and dedicated to Élisabeth Fresneau, the granddaughter of the Comtesse de Ségur, consists of 22 short vignettes telling of the misbehaviours of 4-year-old Sophie and her adventures with her obedient cousin, 6-year-old Paul. As described in Comtesse de Ségur's dedication to her granddaughter, it is through these stories that Sophie learns the lessons needed to correct her behaviour, "She was angry, she became sweet; she was greedy, she became soothing; she was a liar, she became sincere; she was a thief, she became honest; and finally, she was mean, but she became good".

Movements I and II, entitled 'Le jeu de la poupée' and 'Funérailles de la poupée' tell the story of Sophie's new wax doll that she receives as a gift from her father. She loves the doll and plays with it, but then leaves it on the windowsill in the sun. The doll melts, creating the need for its funeral.

In movement III, 'La prèsentation des petits amis', Françaix depicts Sophie's playmates, Camille and Madeline; movement IV, 'Variation de Paul' is a dance for Sophie's cousin, and closest friend, Paul, and movement V 'Pas de deux entre Sophie et Paul' is set as a rollicking waltz with spins and pirouettes in their play. The final two movements 'Le goûter' and 'Danse des filets à Papillons' take place on Sophie's birthday. These tell the story of the tea set that Sophie is given as a birthday gift. Sophie decides to have a tea party for her friends. However, her mother and nanny won't let her make real tea, so she decides to use the water from the dog's dish and mixes it with clover leaves to make 'tea', she uses silver polish for 'cream' and crushed chalk for 'sugar'. Sophie's awkward attempts at the grown up tea service for her young friends can be heard in the 6/8 time signature interspersed with hemiloa. After she serves this mix to her friends, there is a sombre pause as the children and their 'tea' are discovered by Sophie's mother. They abruptly end the tea party, and Sophie's mother gives them butterfly nets so they can go out can play and catch butterflies while the maids clean up the mess. The four children's light dance is heard in the oboes and clarinets, as they chase the fluttering butterfly-flute. The fluttering insects and the chasing children rise in intensity and volume to the exciting and frenetic conclusion of their day.

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